

WORDS & VISION

UCFV Faculty & Staff Association Newsletter

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From the Editor

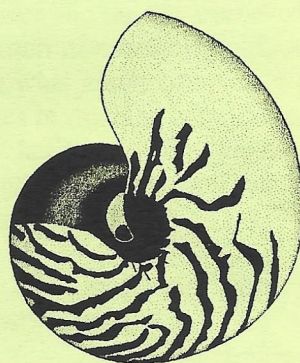
Technology in the Workplace or, Boredom Becomes Electric

Here we go again — but with a stable provincial budget in place, a new skipper taking control of the helm, and a bright life-affirming summer looming dead ahead. Can't be bad.

Yet everyone I talk to these days seems weirdly wired, complaining of being "stressed out" without knowing exactly why. Things, they say, seem to be going fairly smoothly, the term crashing to an end as usual, yet these crotchety colleagues say they're worn out from

riding the prevailing currents of anxiety and tension.

Ever alert for a new conspiracy theory, I ask myself: Could this have something to do with e-mail? I wonder, having just spent some time discussing that increasingly omnipresent medium with my students. Sure, e-mail is great for many things, especially from an admin p.o.v., but as an in-house info-server it may also have a darker side.



Now, we all know that e-mail (no, it doesn't stand for 'evil mail') is quite unlike the perfumed envelopes delivered by your friendly post-person. The electronic matrix can be mysteriously maddening. For some reason, we seem to react more emotionally to the messages therein, as the phenomenon of flaming illustrates. Plus people do the oddest things on-line; take, for instance, those signature blocks, often (infuriatingly) accompanied by pompous mottos — no one,

surely, would put something so revealingly egomaniacal in a regular letter. And remember all those charming stories from a few years back about love blossoming on-line? Touching tales of epistolary romances, complete in some cases with the notorious one-handed keyboard accompaniments; on-line encounters that wound up, decked with orange blossoms, at the altar; and so on. Now, however, I keep hearing people blame e-mail for the **break-up** of their relationships; they say the medium is treacherous, downright swikeful, though *exactly how* is never articulated.

No doubt this has something to do with the immediacy and hence intimacy of e-mail. For many people these days, it has become the prime personal form of communication.

Another theory blames the brain, suggesting that it comprehends text on paper differently than words on a

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screen: 'paper words' enter the 'rational' left hemisphere, whereas backlit language goes more directly into the 'irrational' right side — or is it the other way round? Could this explain the heated reactions that some e-mail messages arouse; messages that, when perused on plain white bond, seem disappointingly innocuous?

Part of the difficulty may be that users do not know *how* to write for the new format; and this is especially problematic in an academic environment. How often do you get lengthy e-mail documents that make your head feel like it's about to explode because you can't spot the nugget of real information that it is meant to convey? Some say that e-mailers are best served by a journalistic style that emphasizes 'scannability' and up-front information. But academics are trained to write in quite another manner, employing highly structured, indirect, expository prose. 'Good' writing, i.e., vigorous, lively, etc., is often distrusted in academia, based on the axiom that what is not turgid and lugubriously plodding cannot be serious.

On the other hand, e-mail is not experienced by readers as a simple short-hand that dispenses with the conventions of correspondence, which include cordiality; when it does, it is found both rude and offensive.

So perhaps we UCFVers are simply GroupWising ourselves into a tizzy. I mean, am I the only one who wants to pound repeatedly on the virtual 'Reply' button, when I get that annoying request on my screen not to use it? Well, am I? Am I?

In any case, until we can all get e-mail therapy under our extended

coverage, or the screens improve significantly, we need creative ways to minimize and/or offset the negative effects of the backlit bugaboo.

One possibility: we could print out all our e-mails and read them on paper, thereby neutralizing the enraging effect in a decidedly ironic manner. (Did you know, by the way, that studies indicate e-mail takes 25% more effort/time to comprehend than paper mail?)

Or we could really push the prose envelope and institute an elaborate, 18th century epistolary e-mail style, something along the lines of, "Cherished Colleague: believe me madam I cannot but feel singularly obliged, having just perused your delightful memorandum of a sennight ago — ah, how time's wingèd chariot flies, to be sure — on the ever-vexing conundrum of timetable conflicts," etc. Or what about composing our messages in rhyming couplets: e.g., "Take heed of yon electronic greeting/Trumpeting forth our next department meeting."

Or — could we 'just say NoWise'? Well ... in the meanwhile, enjoy the following brain-friendly paper pages; this issue we have the usual ripping reports, some engaging letters, daring revelations about UCFV classrooms and the second oldest profession (teaching), plus titanic thoughts on the recent Academy Awards.

See you on the beach.

-Richard Dubanski

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to your editorial on the cover of the Feb/Mar, 1998, edition of your newsletter. The Student Union Society wishes to express that it had nothing to do with the article in *The Cascade* that referred to the FSA as "bullies." We also wish to remind you that this article was not only written by a student in a student's capacity, but also that most students are independent thinkers who value their constitutionally entrenched right to freedom of expression and who hope to express this freedom without fear of "dastardly attacks."

Whereas it would be enticingly desirable at times to be able to boast a consensus of thought amongst our Student Union membership, this is generally — nor should it likely be — the reality. Jamie's article is not representative of the Student Union's views: while we appreciate and acknowledge the substantial aid the FSA members have given (and hopefully still will give) the Student Union and the Student body, we will not oppose his right to express his opinions. Moreover, we will not be vengeful and attack or abandon him for his expression of these views.

Kim's article was well received by Jamie, as were his fellow Student Union members' criticisms and suggestions. Jamie is receptive to constructive feedback, and Kim's response (the only constructive faculty response so far) has been taken to heart. We at the Student Union Society have not found the irony wasted on us — that while you attack Jamie for wrongfully accusing you, you surprisingly attack and

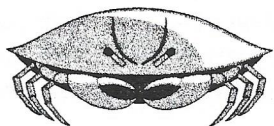
wrongfully accuse us. We have never made it a policy to use surprise tactics and ambush the people we deal with. We are therefore doubly surprised to find that you think this is the sort of tactic we employ, and thus you seem to feel no reservations about using the same tactic in your treatment of us. Interdepartmental communication has been, and will continue to be, an important consideration in all Student Union politics.

Yes... the dastardly attack was routed by your vigilance and timely counterstrike — too bad the editorial's aim wasn't any better than your opponent's.

-Shawn F. Stetsko
VP External, SUS

Ed.: Yeah... a confusion of 'Student' with 'Student Union' — just carelessness on my part, I'm afraid.

On the other hand, words like "ambush" and "counterstrike" seem a bit strong for an editorial that includes expressions of gratitude to our students — and the student paper — for giving the FSA a needed reality check. Rest assured that the Student Union's relationship with the FSA will not be affected/afflicted by my "aim." As far as that goes, well, as we geezers grow older, aim becomes more of a problem. Perhaps W&V's new motto should be 'we aim to please, you aim, too, please' — like I'm always reading in my favourite restaurants (gives a touch of class, I think).



Dear Editor:

Subject: Bi-weekly Pay Periods

Ask a banker what is the best way to reduce the amount of money you pay towards a mortgage, and they will tell you to pay your mortgage more frequently, on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule. Moving to this schedule will save you at least the original amount of the mortgage itself by reducing the amortization period. However, how feasible is this to a faculty member with one family income paid only monthly, regardless of how well they plan their finances? Very difficult as there will be two months where there are three payments. Maybe the people who have been here 10 years, with small mortgages, can manage this, but to a new faculty member with the average house price today, this is not realistic.

So, why don't we bargain for bi-weekly pay periods? The answer has always been "Because it will cost the institution an extra \$14,000 to run the extra cheques through Comcheq — the equivalent of a 50% staff position." Or will it? With the new Banner system coming in, this is the perfect time to initiate bi-weekly pay periods. In fact, by March 13th all 1500 employees and their files will be loaded from Comcheq to the Banner system, and the payment process will be run internally.

I think the union has to be responsible to its present members. A shift to biweekly pay periods, even at \$14,000 per year would cost \$280,000 over a 20 year period while saving the faculty and staff (based on 500 employees moving their mortgage to bi-weekly from

monthly payments) over \$1 million. If we can find \$71,000 in the President's office budget to support a new faculty, surely we can find a few extra dollars to move to biweekly pay periods.

-Gregory Anderson

Dear Editor:

I am disturbed by the attitude of the current FSA Executive as expressed recently in documents circulated to the membership. In particular, several statements in the Feb. 27 document titled "The Overload Issue: 1998 events" seem to imply that the authors believe only the members of the Executive have the best interests of the entire association in mind. On page 9 Kim, Bev and David state, "The members of the Executive are by nature constructive, positive people." Contrast this with their description of the rest of the membership on page 8, "[T]here are relatively few among our membership who instinctively think of the good of the whole before thinking of how a proposal looks to them in particular." Those of us who disagree with the Executive's current action are labeled special interest groups; our statements are twisted or dismissed.

One such special interest group consists of program and department heads. Several members of this group have objected to the FSA Executive's plan to automatically grieve a second overload even if there is no sessional or part-timer available to teach the course. I have heard no one in this special interest group argue that a B faculty should be given an overload at the expense of a current or former sessional or part-time faculty. What we have said is if our sessionals and part-

timer faculty have been given all the work they want and for which they are qualified (or if they have a full-time job elsewhere), let us offer any additional sections to faculty who want to do overloads (because they need the money and are willing to give up family time or recreation time or whatever time they are not already accountable for). As a department head, I object to the suggestion that work within a department is allocated "in a manner governed by mere convenience, conflict of interest, or self-interest on the part of those who allocate it." I also object to the opening "Even for conscientious heads..." This sounds as if a conscientious head is a rare animal, indeed. I would go so far as to suggest that most of us strive to be fair (as well as constructive and positive, even if it's not our nature).

Why is the FSA Executive taking such a strong stand on faculty overloads? In explaining their motivations, the FSA Executive contradicts itself. In the February 2 handout they say: "There are several ways that members can violate the moonlighting policy. Unless they violate other FSA members' rights, the FSA Executive doesn't want to know." Yet, the Executive's proposal which has not changed since discussion began says, "The FSA will initiate Step One of the Grievance Procedure in each case where a second overload contract is given to any full-time employee of UCFV within a single academic year." There is no provision here that the overload be violating another member's rights. They justify this action by saying that the FSA is legally obligated to uphold the collective agreement. I find this argument unconvincing for two reasons: 1) the policy in question is not a part of the collective agreement or even referred to in the collective

agreement, and 2) even if enforcing policies is included in the mandate of the FSA, it seems to me that policies should be enforced for their stated purpose, not coopted to serve another purpose. The stated purpose of UCFV Board's policy 210.15 is to "promote the participation of faculty in various areas of programming at UCFV. Using this policy to provide more work for part-time instructors is a misapplication.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not in favour of giving overloads to B faculty while part-timers and sessionals struggle to make ends meet. I am in favour of continuing past practice of recognizing that part-time and sessional faculty have a greater right to additional work in a department than its fully employed members." I am in favour of strengthening language in the collective agreement to protect the rights of part-time and sessional faculty. I am in favour of having clear guidelines on the allocation of work that are fair to all members of the FSA. I am in favour of finding ways to make people accountable for the work they are supposed to be doing. I am not in favour of spurious grievances that increase my workload and headaches with no benefit to any member of the union. If that makes me a special interest group unable to think of the good of the whole, I'll have to live with that.

-Jacalyn Snodgrass

-Head of Psychology Department
-Coordinator of Program and
Department Heads group

Ed.: Thanks for your cogent commentary.

Dear Editor:

I am responding to last issue's letter from Anne Knowlan commenting on my January Staff Grievance Report. First of all, I would like to thank Anne for her comments — I appreciate that she took the time to respond to my statements.

I am referring here to statements I made about how UCFV responded to the recommendations made a few years ago by the Staff Workload Committee. I said, among other things, "UCFV didn't really hire any more people to lighten the load...". Anne disagreed and said that people were hired in the Library, CATS and Admissions and Records. I was unaware that someone was hired in the Library, but I am really glad to hear it, and I apologize for my incorrect reporting. I was correct, however, in stating that no extra bodies were added to A&R. What did happen in A&R was a conversion of a casual employee to an ongoing 'A' contract. The conversion in and of itself was great for the employee, but it did not address the work load problem, as no extra bodies were added. CATS ended up with a new half time position, which was, although not what they were hoping for, better than nothing.

In my January report, I did not mean to suggest that despite all the work the Staff Workload Committee did there were no hires at all, (I was also on that committee, and went to almost every interview) instead, my point was that staff workload is still an ongoing serious problem that UCFV has yet to satisfactorily address.

-Bev Lowen
Staff Grievance Chair

President's Report

Provincial Budget

With the delivery of the provincial budget on Monday, March 30th, the chain of events that will lead to the finalizing of our own UCFV budget was set in motion. On April 1st, a letter was sent from Andrew Petter, the new Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, to UCFV Board Chair Noel Hall, with copies to Dick Bate and me. This budget letter, which is an annual tradition, describes the factors that have been taken into account and used to develop the post-secondary sector budget. This year, some items of especial interest to the FSA are:

- ▶ an increase of 2900 FTE's (funded full-time equivalent students) to the system
- ▶ a continued commitment to the Technical University
- ▶ an unspecified amount of money intended "to recognize the impact on institutions of the extension of the tuition fee freeze"
- ▶ funding for the first year of the three year implementation of the common faculty salary grid

Petter's letter also mentions changes in the process for providing capital funds for the construction of new facilities. This likely refers to the news we received late in 1997 that the capital projects list — the one that was headed by a new building intended to replace the Chilliwack campus 'motel' — was being discarded in favor of a new priority system that would place a heavy emphasis on demonstrated utilization.

It has been reported that the education sector, and perhaps especially post-secondary education,

fared well in comparison with other services under provincial jurisdiction and funding in this year's budget. If true, this may be attributable, at least in part, to the report of the Task Force on Critical Issues in Post Secondary Education, which was issued in the fall of 1997. This report concluded that there was simply no more slack in the system; if the Ministry expected any expansion in the number of students served, it would have to add resources.

Following the publication of the Task Force's findings, college boards, administrations, unions and student groups were encouraged to work collaboratively with one another to lobby local government (NDP) MLAs, citing the recommendations of the Task Force. FSA First Staff Vice President Anne Reisinger, and Second Faculty Vice President Vern Wright met with MLA Dennis Streifel during the B.C. Federation of Labour convention in November.

UCFV's Budget

The UCFV internal budget committee, which includes an FSA observer, has been meeting periodically to develop a budget plan. Now that the provincial budget has been delivered, detailed information on the UCFV allocation will be sent to Norah Andrew, and the committee will be able to put finishing touches on the budget. So far, what we have heard is that UCFV has been given 200 additional FTE's, with 70 of these intended to cover spring semester. The dollars attached to these FTEs, along with the budget committee's set of assumptions which include no layoffs if at all possible, a commitment to "stay the course," and to provide for unfunded

positions, bodes well for the job security of our members this year. New money coming into the University College is almost enough to cover existing commitments to salary increases for faculty and staff.

The FSA is committed to a number of areas of concern:

- ▶ resolution on those programs and positions that were targeted for layoffs last year. We would like to see these re-incorporated into the base budget
- ▶ possible work reductions for part-timers should a budget shortfall occur, or should the University College decide to take on new initiatives that cannot be funded with the additional money coming in
- ▶ regularization of a number of RPT positions that have gone beyond 3 years, according to Article 31.5 of the Collective Agreement
- ▶ posting of permanent, FSA positions to replace temporary arrangements the FSA agreed to in years past because of budget constraints

Watch for the upcoming budget forums, which have been promised by our administration.

New President — New Era?

I'm writing this column from my hotel room in beautiful downtown Richmond, where Bev Lowen and I take turns representing the FSA at the provincial negotiating table. I just checked my voice mail, and heard the formal announcement that Dr. Harold "Skip" Bassford has been appointed as the new President of UCFV, commencing in July.

I was favorably impressed with the open process that the UCFV

Board followed in selecting a new leader for our University College. The selection committee of 19 members allowed for good representation from all parts of the UCFV community, including faculty and staff. Martin Silverstein, First Faculty V.P., represented the FSA, and reported that the committee worked well together.

Once the committee narrowed the field to two finalists, the college community at large was invited to attend forums and provide comments, which I understand were reviewed by the committee. As FSA President, I was invited to meet with both of the finalists. I spent an hour with Skip Bassford, and Anne Reisinger joined me for an hour-long session with Roger Barnsley. This gave us an opportunity to focus on labour relations issues, to try to get a sense of how these candidates view this critically important area, and how they characterize their role in labour relations in their current positions.

Following these conversations, I spoke with the faculty association presidents at both York University, where Dr. Bassford has just completed a five-year term as Dean of Atkinson College, and at St. Thomas University, from where Dr. Barnsley is currently on leave from his position of Vice President Academic. (I played telephone tag for several days with the president of the support staff union at York University, until he went on holidays and was totally out of reach. Unfortunately, St. Thomas' support staff is not unionized, and so I was unsuccessful at hearing the staff perspective from either institution.) Both faculty association presidents provided me with answers to specific questions I posed, as well as general comments, and I passed these along to our selection committee.

Dr. Bassford is only the fourth person to hold the office of President of UCFV (or FVC), moving in to the position after a ten-year term of office for Peter Jones. We have had a remarkably stable administrative history here, and perhaps as a result we are all experiencing a combination of excitement and trepidation as we move into this new era. On behalf of the FSA, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Skip. We look forward to a good working relationship in the years to come.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dick Bate for the job he has been doing as Acting President of UCFV these past months. Although it is not possible for UCFV's administration and the FSA to agree on all matters, Dick's willingness to discuss our differences and explore mutually-agreeable solutions has been appreciated by members of the Executive.

Faculty Forums

Over the past month, the FSA has held faculty forums on the Chilliwack and Abbotsford campuses. David Morosan has attended each of these, and I have made it to all that did not conflict with my teaching schedule. Other Executive officers have been in attendance as well. Perhaps not surprisingly given the time of term, attendance has not been huge, but those faculty who have come have brought with them comments, insights and concerns that will be taken into consideration as we develop our local contract proposals.

If you have not been able to attend these forums, please do not feel that your opportunity to speak has passed. All members of the FSA Executive are available

through e-mail, and we encourage your participation and feedback.

Final Issue

This is the last issue of *Words & Vision* for the 1997/98 academic year. This year's issues have been full of insight, controversy, intellectual stimulation and entertainment, and I believe that we have a newsletter of which we can be justifiably proud. As I meet with my CIEA counterparts both at Presidents' Council and at the negotiating table, I often receive very positive comments about our newsletter, which is sent out to each CIEA local upon publication. I get the feeling that a number of our fellow colleges and university colleges wonder how we are able to produce such a quality publication.

Part of the credit for the success of *Words & Vision* goes to the contributors, of course, and I would like to extend the FSA's thanks to both the Executive officers who have submitted columns this year, as well as to members who have taken the plunge and added their by-line. We wouldn't have a newsletter without you.

But the lion's share of credit for this venture goes to our editor, Richard Dubanski. In the gentlest manner imaginable, Richard manages to coax columns out of those of us with writer's block, edit them into a form that makes us each look literate, and tie it all together into a package that does the FSA great credit. His delicious sense of the ironic makes his *From the Editor* column my personal favorite. Richard, thank you for your patience, your talent, and your hard work.

Thanks are also due to Fenella Sobchuk, who provides the word-

processing and layout support for *Words & Vision*. She has the difficult and challenging task of taking all of our submissions, whether composed longhand, on WordPerfect 5.1, 6.1, 7.0 or MS Word, on an IBM or a Mac, and pulling it all together into one document. Add to that challenge the fact that most of the regular contributors have last minute changes we need to make (I'm sorry, Fenella!), and you have a recipe for chaos. Fenella handles it all with grace and good humor.

And, finally, thanks are also due to Janet Allansson from Print Services, who provides the FSA with excellent service both in the printing and distribution of *Words & Vision*, but many other FSA publications and announcements as well.

Watch for More

Keep your eyes and ears open over the next months, as FSA,,1 business carries on through the spring. There will soon be an Annual General Meeting package in your mailbox. Provincial contract negotiations will continue, and regular bulletins will be issued by CIEA to keep you informed. Local negotiations will be starting soon, we will keep you posted on the progress of these talks.

-Kim Isaac



Staff Grievance Report

I would like to preface my report with the statement that I am not trying to undermine the good relations the union has had in the past with UCFV Management, as I have sometimes been accused of doing; I am simply reporting the issues I deal with on a day-to-day basis. As well, I am not writing these reports with a pessimistic slant with the intent of making Management look bad. We've got serious problems at UCFV — some that have been ignored for years but still fester, and some more recent developments that have to be addressed.

One on-going problem that many at UCFV refuse to acknowledge is staffers' fear of speaking out in their own defense. This fear stems from the belief that their supervisors, almost always another union member, or co-workers, will make life miserable if the staffers ask for something as fundamental as their rights under the Collective Agreement. It goes even further than that; some staffers are convinced they will lose their jobs if they speak up for themselves. So they work under conditions that are in violation of the Collective Agreement. Most of the time the union is unaware of these kinds of situations but lately more and more employees are coming forward; and for this I am grateful. However, for many, just getting up the courage to make a complaint is as far as they want to go with it; they are far too intimidated and untrusting of the system to allow us to do anything to remedy the situation.

This past week I spoke to two staffers who are working under improper conditions. The first complainant, a long time employee, is doing work that is not in her job description, but which takes up a large part of her working day. Her supervisor refuses to acknowledge the work the employee is doing, and she (the employee) is afraid not to do the work because she does not want to appear incompetent. The second complainant, paid at a group two, is doing work very similar to that which is paid at a group six. The complainant was not originally hired through an SAC, but was appointed to his position under the 'less than four month' clause (Article 13.2 Temporary Vacancies and Staff Secondments). Since then the contract has been repeatedly extended. There is no job description for the position although it has existed for more than two years. At the moment the employee is training someone who is making \$3.00 an hour more than he is. The employee is afraid that his job will be discontinued if he asks for a proper contract and just wage.

These situations are unfair, unhealthy and dangerous — not to mention illegal under our Collective Agreement. I should be grieving both of them but I can not. I can not grieve because the employees, in their desperation not to be seen as a shit disturbers, do not want me to. Although I find staffers' trepidation frustrating and a bitter pill to swallow, I am beginning to understand it. When I first became aware of members' anxious feelings over job security and working conditions, I thought it was just a few isolated incidents. But I was wrong. Even though I don't know why or where it comes from, this fear is real and wide-spread throughout UCFV. And the Union

does not know what to do about it. No matter how often we tell members that they will not lose their jobs or get into trouble by exercising their rights under the Collective Agreement, they argue vehemently to the contrary. I have been told repeatedly that a department will find a way to get rid of employees if they rock the boat. How does the Union deal with this? Maybe we can't. Maybe some supervisors — and by 'supervisors' I mean Managers, Department Heads, Program Heads, Directors, Deans, anyone who has supervisory duties — treat fellow members unfairly because they (the supervisors) are so overworked they do not have the time or energy to look after individual problems. Maybe supervisors are working with such impossibly low budgets that a subordinate asking for accurate compensation puts too great a burden on the limited resources. Maybe supervisors are just as scared of looking bad and losing their jobs as a whole lot of other employees are. Maybe this is not just a UCFV problem, but a societal problem because we live in a world where jobs are few and people are many.

I imagine it's a little of all of the above. Nevertheless, we are a union. Even though it's true that jobs are scarce and it's an employer's market, our rights are protected by law and I can not recall, in the four years I have been involved with the FSA, a member asking for something that she or he was not entitled to.

A more recent development that has many staffers perplexed and bewildered is UCFV's application of the new job classification system to the new salary scale. Now, not everyone is unhappy with their new job rating, subsequent placement on the salary scale and retro pay, but

many are. The whole process has been, and still is, very confusing and problematic. However, the staff component of the FSA Executive, as well as Kim and David, are aware of the many problems. If you have not already received a notice from the FSA office outlining how we plan to handle these difficulties, you will be receiving it soon.

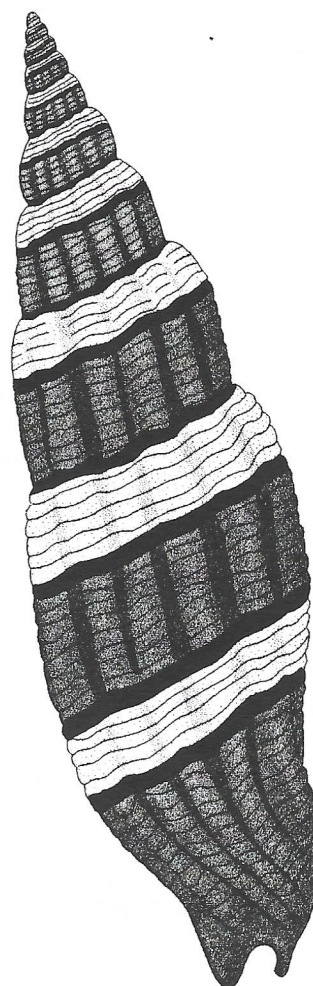
Believe it or not, this report is not all doom and gloom. As Kim mentioned in her report, she and I have taken turns attending the provincial contract negotiations in Richmond. Although, at first, I was disturbed by the length of time it took to get the protocol agreement in place, the more meetings I attend the more respect and admiration I have for the members of the Joint Union Caucus. Made up of about twenty five people from different CIEA and BCGEU locals around the province, the Joint Union Caucus is a very committed, hard working group. The majority of members are from outside the Lower Mainland, so they have been living at the Richmond Inn since January, only going home on weekends. For Rob Huxtable (CIEA) and Danny Bradford (BCGEU), the caucus chairs, and Jack Campbell (CIEA) and Debby Offermann (BCGEU) chief negotiators and contract language writers, a twelve to fourteen hour day is common.

Not only is the whole group dedicated but they are all such nice, interesting, fun people, which is a blessing because we spend a lot of time together. There can be long stretches of down time during the day while we wait for the employers to debate amongst themselves and get back to us on one issue or another, so we spend

that time talking and hearing what's going on at other locals and generally getting to know each other.

I wasn't too sure at first, especially as I am staff not faculty, but I am glad now that UCFV is at the central table, because between there and local bargaining, all of our staff issues will be discussed this year.

-Bev Lowen



A Matter of Class Size

Background & Question

It is not uncommon at the University College of the Fraser Valley to hear people talking about small class size as one of the advantages UCFV offers to students who decide to attend here, rather than at more traditional and larger institutions. Implicit in this notion of small size are implications of educational quality, such as: perhaps more individual attention by the instructor, perhaps more opportunity for interaction, perhaps more effective use of a broader range of evaluative techniques, perhaps a sense of a more welcoming classroom climate, and the like. Small class size, to a great extent then, is used as a slogan for student recruitment and judgment about institutional merit.

After the publication of *Maclean's* magazine (Nov. 24, 1997) seventh annual ranking of universities, and the recent acceptance of the University College of the Fraser Valley into membership with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and on the basis of my experiences in other post-secondary settings across the country, I thought that it might be interesting to examine the warrants for our claims regarding small class size. Below, I set out a comparison between average class sizes of the UCFV and other institutions in the *Maclean's* report, including, UBC, SFU, and UVic.

Because this article is based on the *Maclean's* findings, let me quickly acknowledge that the comparison is limited to class sizes

in university settings, not including technical institutions, other community colleges or other post-secondary settings.

University Categories

Maclean's report (p.31) divides universities (including one university college — the University College of Cape Breton) into three broad types:

MEDICAL/DOCTORAL: "universities with a broad range of PhD programs and research, as well as medical schools," for example, UBC, McGill, Calgary, Queens;

COMPREHENSIVE: "universities with a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs — including professional degrees — at the graduate and undergraduate level," for example, Victoria, SFU, New Brunswick, Guelph;

PRIMARILY UNDERGRADUATE: "universities largely focused on undergraduate education, with relatively few graduate programs," Trent, Lethbridge, Winnipeg, Mount Allison, University College of Cape Breton.

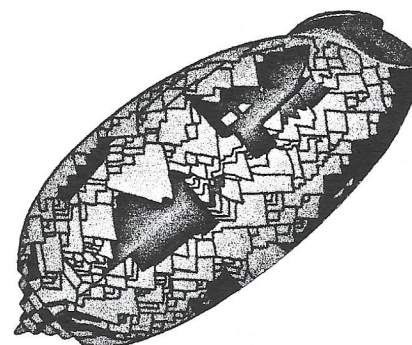
The report assessed these institutions on a variety of features, including average class sizes. Other features included in the assessment are factors such as: nature of the student body, nature of the faculty, finances, library, and reputation.

It seems clear that if the University College of the Fraser Valley were to be included in the survey (which may well occur in the near future), it would fall in the PRIMARILY UNDERGRADUATE (23 institutions) category. According to *Maclean's* report, the

overall ranking of the first ten institutions in this category was as follows:

1. Mount Allison
2. Acadia
3. Trent
4. St. Francis Xavier
5. Wilfrid Laurier
6. Bishop's
7. Winnipeg
8. Lethbridge
9. St. Thomas
10. Moncton

The University College of Cape Breton ranked #21.



UBC ranked 4th (of 15 institutions) in the MEDICAL/DOCTORAL category. SFU ranked 1st (of 13 institutions) in the COMPREHENSIVE category, with the University of Victoria ranking 3rd.

Determining Class Size

Class sizes are set out in the *Maclean's* report (p.50-51) in two broad categories:

- on the basis of first- and second-year level classes,
- on the basis of third- and fourth-year level classes.

In looking at UCFV class size distribution, I followed a format parallel to the above. Through the kind assistance of the UCFV Office of Analytical and Research Studies, I was provided with section sizes for UCFV university courses for Fall 97 and Winter 98.

That office provided the figures in two groups: 100- & 200- level, and 300 & 400-level. The figures below combine the enrolments for these two terms in the above two general categories. While the *Maclean's* figures are for one academic year earlier than the UCFV figures, my assumption is that the most current UCFV figures would be of the greatest interest for comparison purposes.

Tables in the *Maclean's* report set out the comparative class sizes as percentages of classes by size groupings. The groupings are: class sizes of 1-25, 26-50, 51-100, 101-250, 251-500 & over 500.

The calculations for class sizes at UCFV are reflective of these groupings as well. Finally, the *Maclean's* report ranks the institutions in terms of class sizes based on weighting factors for

average section size and access to tenured faculty. The tendency toward smaller class sizes taught by tenured faculty is seen in the *Maclean's* survey as deserving of higher ranking. While the tables below preserve the *Maclean's* rankings, it was not possible on the information available to replicate this weighting factor for UCFV.

Therefore, UCFV has been placed at the head of each listing, with NO inference about where it might fit into the rankings on the bases of class sizes. Tables 1 & 2 include only the top ten PRIMARILY UNDERGRADUATE institutions based on class size.

In addition, UBC, SFU and UVic have been added to the bottom of the listings in each table, for comparative purposes only, and indication of ranking by *Maclean's* relates to their respective groupings, not to the tables below.

Results

Table 1 (next page) indicates the percentage of class sizes for the various institutions at the first and second-year level.

It is clear from this table that, indeed, almost 99% of the first and second-year level university courses at UCFV include less than 50 students.

I was actually surprised to discover that UCFV has class sizes which are in the 51-100 range. Perhaps a curious thing in terms of the claims that are made regarding class size at UCFV.

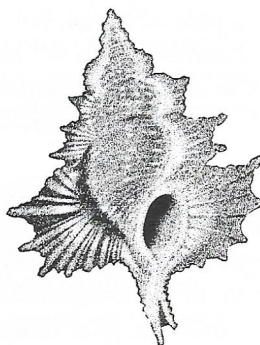
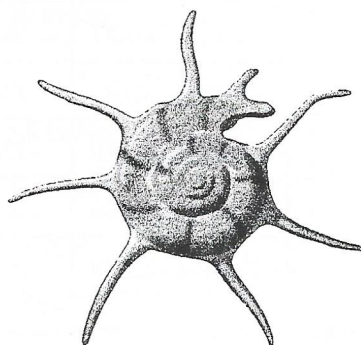
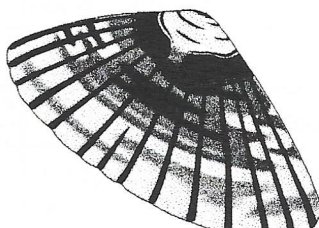
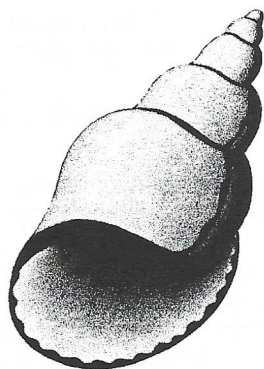


Table 1
Percentage of Classes by Size Groupings
at
First- and Second-year Level

Rank	Institution	1-25	26-50	51-100	101>
n/a	UCFV	47.41	51.40	1.19	--
1	Trent	74.40	9.33	9.33	6.73
2	Bishop's	58.56	30.82	10.62	--
3	Moncton	58.10	28.75	10.70	2.45
4	Rimouski	42.28	50.00	7.72	--
5	Mt. St. Vincent	50.00	33.03	16.51	.46
6	Brandon	52.73	27.27	15.45	4.55
7	Mount Allison	54.50	26.46	11.64	7.41
8	UCCB	48.60	29.44	21.03	.93
9	Nipissing	48.15	30.37	18.52	2.96
9	PEI	48.98	30.20	17.14	3.27
11*	UBC	35.64	30.06	17.82	16.48
6**	Victoria	38.08	28.66	20.84	12.42
8**	SFU	42.29	22.89	16.17	18.66
*Medical/Doctoral Rankings					
** Comprehensive Rankings					

It is interesting that when one examines class sizes of 25 and less in Table 1, UCFV appears not to fare so well. Indeed, in the Primarily Undergraduate category, only one listed institution (Rimouski) offers less opportunity than UCFV for a first and second-year course experience in the smallest class size. It is clear that the other institutions do have some large class experiences in first and second year offerings, but students in those institutions who are successful in staying away from the small percentage of such course offerings are more likely to end up in classes of 25 or less than is the case at UCFV. It seems the most likely first/second-year experience of class size by students at UCFV may well be in situations of 25-50 students: perhaps a larger class size than experienced by equivalent students at comparable institutions.

If one examines the figures in Table 1 in terms of the other BC universities, notwithstanding their larger size, well in excess of 1/3 of the first and second-year offerings fall into the 25 and under class size. In the case of SFU, the percentage (42.29) of the small size offerings begins to come close to equaling that of UCFV (47.41). Indeed, in the case of all three major B.C. universities, very close to or more than 2/3 of the first and second-year offerings have been in class situations of 50 students or less. It appears from the information in Table 1 that UCFV may have no particular special claims as to class size with regard to first and second-year university courses.

Table 2 is an equivalent representation to that in Table 1, but this time for what would generally be third and fourth-year courses. At this level, almost 3/4 of the UCFV offerings fall into the smallest size grouping, class sizes of 25 or less.

Table 2 Percentage of Classes by Size Groupings at Third- and Fourth-year Level				
Rank	Institution	1-25	26-50	51>
n/a	UCFV	74.10	25.90	--
1	Bishop's	91.37	8.63	--
2	Mount Allison	87.44	10.59	1.97
2	Winnipeg	86.40	11.84	1.75
4	Brock	85.07	12.05	2.88
5	Lethbridge	83.40	13.83	2.77
5	St. Mary's	81.63	17.35	1.02
7	Brandon	80.53	18.58	0.88
7	UCCB	82.04	14.56	3.40
9	Moncton	81.78	13.79	4.44
10	Laurentian	79.47	16.18	4.35
11	UBC*	60.36	24.16	15.48
6	UVic**	66.67	25.19	8.15
10	SFU**	61.25	27.12	11.63
*Medical/Doctoral Rankings				
** Comprehensive Rankings				

However, it is interesting to note that this percentage represents the lowest proportion of small class sizes of any of the Primarily Undergraduate institutions listed. And as these percentages relate to the larger BC universities, it would seem, as small classes in those institutions at the third and fourth-year level account for upwards of 2/3 of the offerings, that UCFV may not offer much advantage.

Based on the data in Table 2, it would seem to be the case that third and fourth-year university students at UCFV may well find themselves to be more likely to be in larger classes than would be the case in other Primarily Undergraduate institutions. If one looks at percentage of offerings at class sizes of 50 or less, UCFV would appear to offer little advantage over other BC institutions in relation to small-size course opportunities at the third and fourth-year level.

Table 3 is a listing of the ten Primarily Undergraduate institutions ranked highest overall in the *Maclean's* survey. The table includes the percentage of classes in the smallest range (1-25) for each of these institutions. For comparative purposes, the figures are included for UCFV and the three major BC universities as well.

Table 3 Percentage of Classes in the 1-25 Range for The Top-Ranked Primarily Undergraduate Universities and UCFV, U.C., SFU & UVic			
Rank	Institution	First & Second Year	Third & Fourth Year
n/a	UCFV	47.40	74.10
1	Mount Allison	54.50	87.44
2	Acadia	36.22	75.17
3	Trent	74.40	80.66
4	St. Francis Xavier	48.79	73.20
5	Wilfred Laurier	48.59	75.60
6	Bishop's	58.56	91.37
7	Winnipeg	36.61	86.40
8	Lethbridge	39.01	83.40
9	St. Thomas	41.36	69.89
10	Moncton	58.10	81.78
n/a	UBC	35.67	60.36
n/a	UVic	38.08	66.67
n/a	SFU	42.29	61.25

In the placement on Table 3 among the Primarily Undergraduate institutions, if we compare on the basis of percentage of small class sizes alone, UCFV would be 7th in terms of percentage of small-size first and second-year offerings and 9th in terms of percentage of small-size third and fourth-year offerings. The major BC universities do not do as well, but the differences may not be nearly as significant as the common parlance would have us believe.

Concluding Comments

To the extent that class size may affect learning, it may be the case that UCFV ought to look closely at the matter of class size, particularly with regard to third and fourth-year offerings.

Although, personally, I seldom like to think in terms of inter-institutional competition for students, it may well be that current UCFV policies with regard to class size reduce any institutional competitive advantage to a moot point.

To the extent that percentage of course offerings at UCFV may tend toward the 26-50 range, it may be that such offerings may be less well supported than in other institutions which have a percentage of very large offerings and then a large percentage of offerings in the smallest range.

Smaller class sizes (1-25) may well be able to be adequately managed by one instructor, with conventional support of photocopying facilities, instructional media facilities, library and the like. Very large class sizes often operate with a variety of additional support resources in terms of teaching assistants, educational support, grading assistants and the like.

In the case of UCFV, however, large percentages of the offerings are in the 26-50 category. Such an "incremental creeping class size" without appropriate increases in support, instructional assistance or otherwise, may well compromise the educational — not to mention the learning — experience. One very obvious manifestation of this is a situation in which physical facilities which are most effective with seating for up to 25, are squeezing in 10 or 15 more seats, to accommodate the larger numbers.

Intimacy of learning environment is not a function of class size only, but class size, in my estimation, is a

key factor. My own sense after looking at the above figures is that the UCFV teaching-learning experience in relation to class size may be a matter requiring more attention. Or perhaps, we simply need to be careful of our claims.

-Don Chapman

I'm The King of the Castle

(And you're the dirty rascal.) There are to be prizes, it seems, for the best professing--gold stars for select CVs. "UCC", says the memo, "in conjunction with our own Teaching and Learning Centre, will set up a committee [i] to consider establishing internal [teaching] awards and [ii] to develop criteria for such awards." In that order, I hope, although I have trouble imagining that the new committee's first act will be to declare the whole idea misbegotten and move to disband. Besides, I gather UCC is gung-ho about these awards; presumably most of the committee's work will be in figuring out not whether but how to award them.

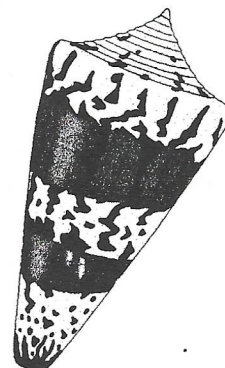
Now *there's* a task worthy of a thousand well-paid person-hours! Will the criteria be those of Olympic ice dance, or those of Olympic bobsled? Teaching is a profession, not production line piecemeal, and teaching outcomes are harder to quantify than widgets. Sometimes, even, as in the sister professions, the operation is successful but the patient dies.

My qualms would be quieted somewhat if we *could* come up

with an objective measure of great teaching--so many students turning up down the road with a PhD or a CEO, for example; so many A's given out per decade; so many acolytes submitting notarized testimony to a deep and abiding love of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land."

But surely the subjective dimension will be paramount. "Exemplary" teaching, "great" teaching, "outstanding" teaching: these are categories of judgment, not calculus. And who shall judge? Our students, as is presently the case? I would never argue that a student is not in a position to judge the quality of the teaching she has gotten, but I take it to be a mere fact (as opposed to a mere judgment) that a good teacher is not precisely the same thing as a teacher a student likes. If the committee can come up with no broader criteria than student response, I hope they will at least have the candour to identify the honouree not as Best teacher but as Most Popular.

And what if the committee decides that student opinion is *not* a sufficient criterion for a teaching award? By extension, student opinion may be found insufficient for faculty evaluations too! This unlooked-for outcome would go a long way toward allaying my objections altogether.



I have given some thought to how I would feel if such an award were given (a) to a colleague I considered as good a teacher as I am or better, (b) to a colleague I considered worse, (c) to me. In the case of (a), I think I would think *well that's all very nice, and good for him, but good grief there are at least a hundred equally qualified people at this institution and how bloody arbitrary it is to single out one for a medal*. In the case of (b) I think I would think *what did that egregious bum do to deserve this?* In the case of (c) I hope I would have the grace to feel embarrassed and unworthy, on the grounds expressed in (a).

None of the above responses, I should add, strikes me as being conducive to the spirit of collegiality and upward striving which I assume it would be the purpose of such awards to foment.

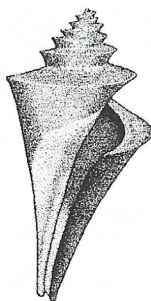
So what *is* the point of the whole exercise? Is it to honour excellent teaching at UCFV? I thought we did that already. I don't have our Mission Statement in front of me, but a commitment to high-quality teaching has always been at the top of any list of what we think we are doing here — so much so that a former Dean used to go around to local service clubs and make speeches boasting that we were "a teaching institution and *our faculty do no research!*"

Heaven forfend, but what if the whole thing is, under the guise of honouring our best and our brightest, nothing more than an elaborate P.R. exercise, on the principle that good teaching, like justice, whether or not it is actually and consistently and widely done, must be seen to be done?

If UCFV really wants to support good teaching, here are a few suggestions that have nothing to do with winners and losers, with a "Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls" style of celebrity politics. How about reducing workloads, making them more equitable, working to avert the "burn 'em up and chuck 'em out at fifty" syndrome? How about ratcheting *down* class sizes, rather than always up, on the famous principle that genuine individual contact between students and teachers (even to the extent of knowing students' names) abets learning. How about putting some meaningful dollars into the ed leave and scholarly activity funds, so that, especially now that we are a U.C., and the former Dean's speeches notwithstanding, teachers at UCFV can feel a bit more like creators of knowledge and not just transmitters of it?

This issue of teaching prizes will (surely) be debated warmly and intelligently, and I look forward to hearing that I am not entirely justified in my suspiciousness. For now, though, my belief is that collective excellence in teaching must be supported in every imaginable way by the institution and the community. Individual virtue, on the other hand, must be its own reward.

-Graham Dowden



The Nature of the Medium: On Imagining the Academy Awards

I thought Sean Connery was the MC, but I was told later he only gave the award for best picture and somebody else was the MC. I haven't watched movies in so long that I forget what Sean Connery looks like, but I could tell by his voice that it was he talking. The voice said, "And the winner is... *Titanic*." That word "titanic", punched out with that exact timing: a short pause, and then a little explosion of the Scots brogue. It made me think of the scene in a movie where Connery is a scientist in the Amazonian jungle, wearing reading glasses around his neck and swinging through the trees with a lovely much younger assistant, saving her on various occasions by holding her close to him. He grabbed her with one arm in the scene I'm recalling, and hung on the rope with the other, and they swung like Tarzan and Jane and she shrieked. She was in love: we knew this. Her body felt the electricity of the scene, being with his body.

Apparently they showed clips of Jack Nicholson, who won the Best Actor award. Oh, it was so imaginary: Hollywood movies are so good that the seam separating fantasy from reality becomes unreliable. What is wonderful about watching the awards, and I suppose the reason people watch them, is that you get to see the actors "being themselves," at an emotional moment in real life, that moment when they are receiving a prize for their professional activities as actors, and when you get to see them acting

in their real lives on the TV screen in that way, you wonder who is the character and who is the actor, which is the same question German playwright Bertolt Brecht wondered about, and it doesn't matter whether it's Jack Nicholson or Sean Connery. The mix-up is so real and Shakespearean you tingle.

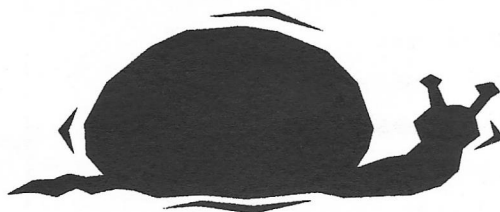
Over a billion people watch it. I read this in *The Vancouver Sun*. That's fewer people than Bill Gates has dollars, or even Jimmy Pattison here in BC has dollars, but it's still a lot of people. They see the Academy Awards in China. China has one-point-two billion people. Not all of them see it, but those serviced by Rupert Murdoch's 'Star' TV Network, coming out of Hong Kong do. James Patten, the last Governor General of Hong Kong, wrote a memoir of his period in office which Murdoch axed at the last minute. Harper Collins was going to publish it, but Murdoch, the company's owner, didn't want to offend the Chinese — the new "masters," as the news put it, of Hong Kong — by publishing an unflattering portrait of their actions during the "takeover" of the "former British Colony." Rupert Murdoch also owns *The London Times*, *The New York Post*, *The Australian*, Fox TV, etc. In the same week as the Oscars, Bertelsman, the

German media conglomerate, took over Random House Publishers in the US and thus became the third largest media conglomerate in the world, after Time-Warner and Disney. Lucy McNeil on the CBC noon show here in Vancouver hasn't even heard of Bertelsman, as she admitted, and was surprised about this. They must conduct their business very discreetly, she told Mark, her co-host, and they both giggled.

Oh, the media! I loved imagining and not watching the Academy Awards. Atom Egoyan, the Canadian entry (the "dark horse," as some media called him) didn't win any prizes, and I don't remember seeing him on the screen, even in the audience, although I knew he was there, because I had read it in the newspaper, how his "organization" had spent twenty million something dollars, more almost than on his film, *The Sweet Hereafter*, to get him considered for the Awards. They sent videotapes to the Academy of Motion Pictures' 5001 or so members, and made sure the movie was in all the theatres in towns where Academy members lived, but the cameras didn't show him or his wife. (I've forgotten her name, it is

foreign), who stars in all or a lot of his films. The Academy of Motion Pictures members are all "old white men," as the newspaper article in which I read about Atom and his award campaign and his wife put it and they are a bit of a gerontology. The newspaper article didn't say this, but I intuited it because it was right on the adjacent page to the article about Murdoch and China and the gerontology which, according to the article, runs that country. It's time to get some younger faces in there, the article said. The Academy (like the Chinese government) tends to be conservative in its taste, very Hollywood, the story continued, and hence they gave "the nod" to *Titanic*, which is a period piece and a traditional Hollywood blockbuster. They gave a nod to Matt Damon for best writer, too, by furnishing a nomination, and this was a nod to youth in this otherwise very gerontological ceremony. How old is Sean Connery now? I don't know if Damon and his writing partner — what was his name again? — won, but I think they did. I didn't see them on the screen, but this could be because I wasn't looking. I leave the room sometimes when I watch TV, this being the nature of the medium.

-Norbert Rubesaat



*FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION***Annual General Meeting****DATE: MAY 6th, 1998****TIME: 3:00 pm****PLACE: Theatre, Chilliwack****FSA SHOP STEWARDS 1998****Staff Local**

Lynn Best	4244
Gloria Borrows	4282
Ellen Dixon	4264
Mary-Grace Grant	4272
Lenora Gaib	4735
Colleen Olund	4524
Lynda Town	4477
Doug Rasmussen	4477

Faculty Local

Robin Anderson	4282
Vicki Grieve	2439
Wendy Burton	2413
Val McDonald	4316
Leslie Wood	4284
Tim Lynch	4387

FSA NOMINATION FORM**ELECTION OF OFFICERS
YEAR 1998/1999**

Nominations shall be open until the Annual General Meeting & shall close at the Annual General Meeting.

Please complete and forward to the FSA Office, Abbotsford campus.

POSITIONS TO BE FILLED:

President
Past President
First Faculty Vice-President
First Staff Vice-President
Second Faculty Vice-President
Second Staff Vice-President
Recording Secretary
Treasurer
Contract Chair
Communications Chair
Grievance Chair (Faculty)
Grievance Chair (Staff)
Professional Development Chair
Agreements Chair
Job Classification Audit Chair
Occupational Health & Safety Chair

CIEA Reps: Non-Regular Faculty, Status of Women, Human Rights

I NOMINATE _____

FOR THE POSITION OF _____

(name and signature of NOMINATOR)

(date)

I ACCEPT THE NOMINATION _____
(signature of NOMINEE)

Please complete and forward to the FSA Office, Abbotsford campus.

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